

Studying social supply networks through the internet

Introduction

- ▶ Social supply as a concept
 - What is *social supply*?
 - Theoretical framework?
 - Analytical value?
- ▶ Research design

Social supply: definition

- ▶ Research end–use distribution cannabis
 - Social relationship
 - Non–monetary transaction

► Social supply

- *“the non-commercial (or non-profit making) distribution of cannabis to non-strangers”* (Hough, 2003)
- However: no agreed definition (Potter, 2009)

Theoretical framework

- ▶ Several theories of drug use pay attention to social context and social relationships
- ▶ Two main viewpoints:
 - Cultural separation
 - Cultural integration
- ▶ Social network theory?

► Cultural separation:

- Social learning and subcultural theories (Becker, 1963):
 - Peers influence others into a form of “traditional” subculture

► Cultural integration (Parker, 2002; Beck, 1992):

- Individualisation and risk management

- ▶ Social network theory (Coomber & Turnbull, 2007)
 - Social network analysis (Cotterell, 2007; Fuhse, 2009):
 - Social networks as building blocks for drug markets

Analytical value?

- ▶ Social supply:
 - a way to normalize drug use without normalizing drug dealing (Potter, 2009)

- ▶ Theoretical framework:
 - Situate social supply within the wider debate surrounding social relations at retail-level in drug markets

Research questions

- ▶ How does a user describe his relationship with his supplier?
- ▶ How is a user's personal supply network structured?
- ▶ To what extent does a user gets his cannabis for free?
- ▶ How does a user position himself in the supply network he describes?

Research design

- ▶ Hidden population: young recreational cannabis users
- ▶ Mixed method approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003; Scott, 2011):
 - Study both structure and meaning of personal networks
 - Both online and face-to-face data collection

► Quantitative

- Websurvey: fuzzy set social network analysis (Ragin, 2000):
 - Personal network structure
 - How does a respondent perceive himself within his networks?

► Qualitative

- Semi-structured interviews
 - Study meaning structure, visualise social networks
 - Referral?

- ▶ Virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000; Barratt, 2010):
 - Structure of (virtual) networks
 - Obstacles:
 - Access
 - Identity
 - Study meaning structure of networks

Thank you!

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